

Applicant : Scott Montgomery
Appl. No. : 09/990,605
Examiner : Kambiz Abdi
Docket No. : 703602.6

Amendments to the Claims

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Claims 1-45 (canceled)

46. (withdrawn) A method of providing a postage indicium for use in a postal system, comprising:

receiving a unique identifier request from an end user computer;

transmitting a unique identifier to the end user computer in response to the unique identifier request, wherein the unique identifier is unique within the postal system;

receiving a postage indicium request from an end user computer;

generating a unique postage indicium carrying the unique identifier;

deriving a digital signature from the unique identifier;

generating a self-validating unique postage indicium by associating the digital signature with the unique postage indicium; and

transmitting the self-validating unique postage indicium independently from the unique identifier transmitted in response to the unique identifier request.

47. (withdrawn) The method of claim 46, wherein all of the steps are performed in a centralized postage-issuing computer system.

48. (withdrawn) The method of claim 47, further comprising receiving the unique identifier at the centralized postage-issuing computer system from a master tracking computer system.

Applicant	:	Scott Montgomery
Appl. No.	:	09/990,605
Examiner	:	Kambiz Abdi
Docket No.	:	703602.6

49. (withdrawn) The method of claim 48, further comprising transmitting another unique identifier request from the centralized postage-issuing computer system to the master tracking computer system in response to receipt of the unique identifier request from the end user computer.

50. (withdrawn) The method of claim 48, further comprising storing the received unique identifier within the centralized postage-issuing computer system prior to receiving the unique identifier request.

51. (withdrawn) The method of claim 46, wherein the unique identifier request is received at a master tracking computer system, the unique identifier is transmitted from the master tracking computer system, and the remaining steps are performed in a centralized postage-issuing computer system, the method further comprising receiving the unique identifier at the centralized postage-issuing computer system from the end user computer.

52. (withdrawn) The method of claim 46, wherein the unique identifier is a single unique character string.

53. (withdrawn) The method of claim 52, wherein the unique identifier comprises a unique tracking ID.

54. (withdrawn) The method of claim 46, wherein the unique identifier comprises two or more character strings.

55. (withdrawn) The method of claim 54, wherein the unique identifier comprises a postage vendor ID, user account number, and piece count.

56. (withdrawn) The method of claim 46, wherein the digital signature association comprises attaching the digital signature to the unique postage indicium.

Applicant : Scott Montgomery
Appl. No. : 09/990,605
Examiner : Kambiz Abdi
Docket No. : 703602.6

57. (withdrawn) The method of claim 46, further comprising:

receiving the unique identifier at the end user computer;

receiving the self-validating unique postage indicium at the end user computer;

and

applying the receiving unique identifier and self-validating unique postage indicium to a mail piece.

58. (withdrawn) The method of claim 57, wherein the received unique identifier is applied to the mail piece in a one-dimensional barcode format, and the self-validating unique postage indicium is applied to the mail piece in a two-dimensional barcode format.

59. (withdrawn) The method of claim 57, wherein the mail piece is a package.

60. (withdrawn) The method of claim 57, wherein the mail piece is an envelope.

61. (withdrawn) The method of claim 46, wherein the digital signature is generated by applying a private key to the unique identifier.

62. (withdrawn) The method of claim 46, wherein the postal system is the United States Postal Service.

63. (withdrawn) The method of claim 46, wherein the unique postage indicium further has one or more items selected from the group consisting of an indicia version number, algorithm identification, certificate serial number, device identification, ascending register, postage, date of mailing, originating zip code, software identification, descending register, and rate category.

Claims 64-156 (canceled)

Applicant	:	Scott Montgomery
Appl. No.	:	09/990,605
Examiner	:	Kambiz Abdi
Docket No.	:	703602.6

157. (new) A postage indicia generation system for implementation with a postal system, comprising:

a centralized postage-issuing computer system accessible to a plurality of end user computers, configured to generate and transmit a unique postage indicium to an end user computer upon request by the end user computer to be applied to a mail piece;

a master tracking computer system, communicatively coupled to the centralized postage-issuing computer system, configured to generate a unique tracking identification string to be applied to the mail piece and to send the unique tracking identification string to the centralized postage-issuing computer system,

wherein the centralized postage-issuing computer system is further configured to associate the tracking identification string with the unique postage indicium and store the association in a database,

further wherein the centralized postage-issuing computer system enables a user to verify the unique postage indicium on the mail piece by sending the tracking identification string to the centralized postage-issuing computer system.

158. (new) The postage indicium generation system of claim 157, wherein the unique tracking identification string on the mail piece is represented as a one-dimensional barcode, and wherein the centralized postage-issuing computer system enables a user to verify the unique postage indicium on the mail piece by submitting data derived from the one-dimensional barcode.